

A Growing Diversity

1993–2017

In late April 1975, eight-year-old Anh (Joseph) Cao's long and improbable odyssey to the halls of Congress began as North Vietnamese communists seized the southern capital city of Saigon.¹

The trajectory of the soft-spoken, bookish Cao toward Capitol Hill stands out as one of the most remarkable in the modern era, even as it neatly encapsulated post-1965 Asian immigration patterns to the United States.

Still, the origins of Cao's story were commonplace. For three decades, conflict and civil war enveloped his country. After the Vietnamese threw off the yoke of French colonialism following World War II, a doomed peace accord in 1954 removed the French military and partitioned Vietnam. The new government in South Vietnam aligned with Western world powers, while North Vietnam allied with communist states. Amid the Cold War, the U.S. backed successive Saigon regimes against communist insurgents before directly intervening in 1965. A massive ground and air war dragged on inconclusively for nearly a decade. More than 58,000 American troops were killed, and more than three million South and North Vietnamese perished.² Public opposition in the United States eventually forced an end to the intervention.

America's decision to withdraw from Vietnam shattered Joseph Cao's family just as it did many thousands of others as communist forces soon swamped the ineffectual government and military in the South.

In 2011 Japanese-American veterans received the Congressional Gold Medal for their valor during World War II. The medal included the motto of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, "Go for Broke."

Nisei Soldiers of World War II Congressional Gold Medal Obverse © 2011 United States Mint





Vietnamese refugees, including this family aboard the USS *Hancock* in 1975, fled their country in four waves from 1975 to the mid-1990s.

Image courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration

Just days before Saigon fell, Cao's mother, Khang Thi Tran, spirited one of her daughters and two sons, including Anh, to a U.S. airfield. Along with their aunt, the three children were airlifted out and then transported to Guam. As three of more than 130,000 people who evacuated from Saigon and South Vietnam, Cao and his siblings joined the first of four waves of Vietnamese immigration to the United States that stretched into the mid-1990s.³

From Guam, the siblings' paths diverged. The aunt kept one of the boys; the daughter traveled to Florida to live with an American foster family; and Anh went to live with a bachelor uncle in Goshen, Indiana. He entered the first grade and learned English from his classmates, delivered newspapers to earn money, and eventually relocated to Houston, Texas. Cao's mother and several siblings remained behind in Vietnam, and for seven years, the communists imprisoned and tortured his father, My Quang Cao, a former officer in the South Vietnamese Army. Eventually, in the early 1990s, the family reunited in America.⁴

Joseph Cao's story, however, was just beginning. After spending years preparing for the priesthood, he left the seminary and went to law school, believing that he could better serve the poor and disadvantaged as a public servant. He settled in New Orleans in a growing Vietnamese community, practiced law, and was drawn into politics as the city fought to recover from the devastation wreaked by Hurricane Katrina in 2005. In 2008, running as a Republican for a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives from a city that Democrats dominated, Cao upended a nine-term incumbent, becoming the first Vietnamese American to win a seat in Congress. "It's like the American Dream," a neighbor and supporter observed.⁵

Cao's story was inextricably linked with late 20th-century immigration. By 2010 Vietnamese Americans numbered 1.7 million and comprised the fourth largest group of Asians in the United States, behind only Chinese, Filipinos, and Indians. Nearly 84 percent of the group was foreign-born, well above the average of Asian Americans generally, and most were refugees who, like Cao, sought safety from political persecution and the ravages of war. They had settled largely in the West and the South in or near urban areas. While Vietnamese Americans had the lowest voter registration rates of the major Asian-American groups, Cao's election marked a moment of ethnic pride and suggested the rising influence of Asian Americans.⁶

The story of the Vietnamese-American community, which grew from several hundred thousand in 1980, was but one piece of a larger mosaic of Asian immigration to the United States. Driven by Cold War conflicts in faraway places like Laos and Cambodia and made possible by the legacy of mid-1960s immigration reform, these trends profoundly affected the story of Asian Pacific Americans (APAs) in Congress.

HART–CELLER LEGACIES

The 1965 Hart–Celler Act overhauled immigration policy in the United States by increasing access for new immigrant groups and producing a demographic revolution in the U.S. population. The long-lasting effects of this legislation have, in large measure, shaped the composition of the modern Congress. Over



President Lyndon B. Johnson delivers remarks at the ceremonial signing of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 on Liberty Island. The law, also known as the Hart–Celler Act, transformed immigration policy in the United States.

Photograph by Yoichi Okamoto; image courtesy of the Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library/National Archives and Records Administration

the last 50 years, APA communities in the United States have grown in both number and diversity. As of 2011, APAs (both foreign- and native-born) made up nearly 6 percent of the entire U.S. populace and their total population stood at 18.2 million. More than half of the entire foreign-born population of the United States has entered the country since 1990, and at the time of this writing, APAs represent the fastest-growing group.⁷ In fact, in the 30 years between 1980 and 2010, the APA population jumped nearly fourfold.⁸

This population boom has helped to redefine America’s electoral makeup and changed the face of the national legislature. Including current Members and first-termers, 28 of the 60 Congressmen and Congresswomen profiled in this book have been elected after 1993 (47 percent). Unlike in the previous 100-plus years when statutory representatives accounted for the bulk of Asian Pacific Americans in Congress, only three of the 28 Members in this section serve or have served as Delegates. The remaining 25 Members represent nearly 70 percent of all APA Representatives and Senators ever elected with full voting rights.

A consequential development in Asian immigration over the last 40 years has been the marked diversity of the people coming to America. No longer a story dominated by Chinese and Japanese immigration, Asian immigration in the modern era involves a greater proportion of immigrants from the Philippines, India, Vietnam, and Korea. Whereas Japanese Americans once accounted for nearly half of the entire Asian-American population, as of 2010, they had dropped to around 7 percent. Chinese Americans make up the largest segment of America’s Asian population at around 23 percent. They are followed by Filipinos (roughly 20 percent), Indians (18 percent), Vietnamese (10 percent), and Koreans (also around 10 percent). Many have settled in the States to fill jobs and reunite with family, and many have gone on to become naturalized citizens.⁹

The Members in this section—both former and current—reflect this new diversity. In addition to Joseph Cao, who fled Saigon, Jay C. Kim was born in

Seoul, before Korea's partition, and immigrated to the United States in 1961; Senator Mazie Hirono was born in Japan and grew up in Fukushima before moving to Hawaii around the age of eight; David Wu was born in Taiwan and moved to the United States in 1961 to rejoin his father, who was studying in America; Congressman S. Raja Krishnamoorthi and Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal were both born in India; and Senator Tammy Duckworth, whose father was a U.S. military veteran and whose mother was from Thailand and later became a U.S. citizen, was born in Bangkok.¹⁰

Seven other Members who were born in the United States had at least one parent immigrate from overseas: Charles Djou's father was from Shanghai, China, and his mother was from Bangkok, Thailand; Bobby Jindal's parents came over from India, as did Congressman Ami Bera's and Congressman Ro Khanna's. Congresswoman Judy Chu's mother was from China; Congresswoman Grace Meng's parents emigrated from Taiwan; Steve Austria's father was from the Philippines; and Hansen Clarke's father was from Bangladesh.

America's Pacific territories continue to play a prominent part in the makeup of the modern Congress as well, and they account for the birthplace of four Members in this section: Robert A. Underwood was born in Guam and later served as its Delegate; Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan was born in Saipan in the Northern Mariana Islands; Colleen Hanabusa was born in Honolulu when Hawaii was still a U.S. territory; and Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard was born in American Samoa.

Although the 1965 Hart–Celler Act laid the groundwork for a substantial portion of Asian immigration to America, much of the recent movement between countries has also been driven by job markets both here and abroad.¹¹

But even that change can, in large measure, be tied to the 1965 law. Along with family reunification, the Hart–Celler Act created a number of opportunities for professional and highly skilled Asian immigrants. As Erika Lee, a noted historian of the Asian-American experience, has observed, that policy remained firmly in place as the country entered the 21st century. Lee points to U.S. companies in high-tech fields that recruit overseas. In fact, Asian immigrants, she notes, receive nearly 75 percent of all H-1B visas set aside for “highly skilled” immigrant workers.¹² “The majority of new arrivals,” Lee wrote in *The Making of Asian America*, “come to join family already here and bring a different set of educational and professional skills than earlier immigrants.”¹³

REFUGEE CRISIS

Much of the emigration from South and Southeast Asia can also be traced to a series of laws passed in response to the Vietnam War and the fallout from the West's fight against communism.

Like global conflicts before it, the Vietnam War forced America to confront a serious refugee crisis. The United States had been slow to develop a refugee policy during World War II, and afterward Congress designed the Displaced Persons Act of 1948 to help Europeans who met restrictive credentials—namely, non-Jews and non-Catholics. As the immigration historian Mae M. Ngai has pointed out, over the next two decades America's refugee policy worked on something of “an ad hoc basis” and was often in conflict with international law.¹⁴



This map was part of an October 1970 *Indochina Atlas* published by the Office of Basic and Geographic Intelligence of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency. The map shows North Vietnam and South Vietnam, which were created after a 1954 peace accord removed the French military and partitioned Vietnam into the South, aligned with western world powers, and the North, aligned with communist nations.

Image courtesy of the University of Texas Libraries

By the mid-1970s, as governments in South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos fell and displaced thousands of people, many Americans, including Members of Congress, opposed proposals to allow them to settle in the United States. When U.S. immigration agencies finally began admitting Southeast Asian refugees, they were quickly confronted by a wave of people in need of help.¹⁵

In 1975, responding to the refugee crisis, Congress passed the Indochina Migration and Refugee Assistance Act, setting aside \$405 million for a two-year evacuation and resettlement program to assist refugees from South Vietnam and Cambodia.¹⁶ Congress quickly amended the law to clear the way for thousands of refugees from Laos.¹⁷

For the rest of the 1970s, the crisis in Southeast Asia only worsened as a second wave of refugees began fleeing the region. Chinese families escaped Vietnam; Cambodians fled the autocratic and murderous Khmer Rouge regime; Laotians streamed into Thailand. In total, more than 100,000 people in the region fled for their lives. The U.S. government, still struggling with the scope of the crisis, responded by admitting more than 20,000 additional refugees and opening up residency opportunities and access to social services.¹⁸



Judiciary Committee Chairman Peter Rodino of New Jersey supported the Refugee Act of 1980, calling it “one of the most important pieces of humanitarian legislation ever enacted by a U.S. Congress.”
Collection of the U.S. House of Representatives

Amerasian:
Term used to describe the children of U.S. military personnel and Asian partners born outside the United States.

The Refugee Act of 1980 overhauled many of America’s humanitarian policies. It broadened the federal designation of “refugee” and opened the door to more people looking to settle in the United States. The legislation also included funding for new relief programs.

Image courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration

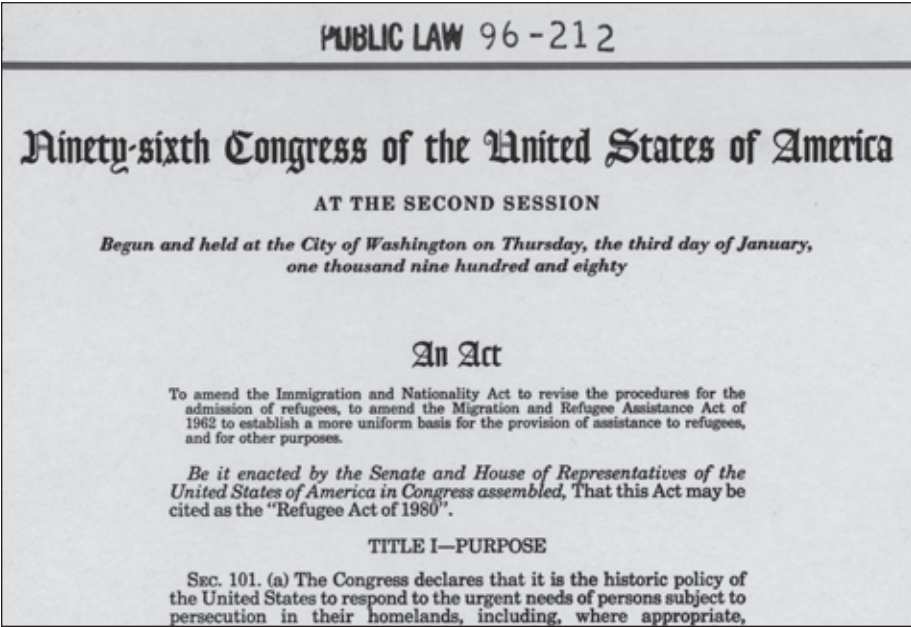
When the 96th Congress (1979–1981) convened, the Indochina refugee crisis remained at full boil. The United States agreed to accept another 15,000 Indochinese refugees over the next year, but the flow of refugees into camps in Thailand, Hong Kong, and other parts of Southeast Asia far surpassed the trickle of asylum-seekers being resettled elsewhere.¹⁹

To address the refugee crisis, the 96th Congress formed the Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy and tasked it with developing a blueprint for comprehensive reform. Congress eventually created a new office—the Coordinator for Refugee Affairs—and moved many of the refugee programs to the Department of Health and Human Services. It capped the total number of refugees at 50,000, limited the administration’s parole power, and required the President to confer with Congress when raising the annual quota.²⁰

The Refugee Act of 1980 was the country’s most comprehensive refugee legislation and overhauled many of America’s humanitarian policies. With new accountability systems in place and federal funding to match, Judiciary Committee Chairman Peter Rodino of New Jersey proclaimed it was “one of the most important pieces of humanitarian legislation ever enacted by a U.S. Congress.”²¹

As in previous conflicts abroad, U.S. soldiers serving overseas occasionally fathered children during the Vietnam War. When reports surfaced in the early 1970s that these children, known as “Amerasians” because they were born to an American parent, were being shunned in South Vietnam as *bui doi* (dust or trash), certain Members of Congress took up their cause. On May 21, 1971, Hawaii Representative Patsy Takemoto Mink introduced H.R. 8462, providing special entry visas for Amerasians in South Vietnam, but the bill never made it out of the Judiciary Committee.²²

Increasing media coverage and lobbying pressure led to improved awareness, but it was not until 1982 that Congress passed the Amerasian Immigration Act, allowing Amerasians to immigrate to the United States under a nonquota visa using the family reunification provision.²³



The program, however, required eligible children to enter the States from a country with which the United States had diplomatic relations. This precluded Vietnam, but it included countries with substantial Vietnamese populations, including the Philippines, South Korea, and Thailand. The bill also prevented the parent or any half-siblings from immigrating to the United States under the same conditions. President Ronald Reagan signed the bill in the fall of 1982, noting it acknowledged “the rightful claim of Amerasian children to American citizenship.”²⁴

The bill struggled to make much of an impact. Few people took advantage of the program, since most of the qualified participants were still children and were unable to locate sponsorship in America. Critics of the measure called it nothing more than an empty gesture.²⁵

Congress revisited the issue of Amerasian immigration in 1987 with new legislation that assumed no documentation would exist to prove American parentage and cleared the way for the child’s immediate family to enter the United States as well. The children would be counted against Vietnam’s immigration quota, but a provision introduced by Robert Mrazek of New York ensured that they would receive refugee benefits, such as cultural and language training.²⁶ While the House Judiciary Committee blocked Mrazek’s bill, he managed to have it embedded in the omnibus continuing appropriations act.²⁷

By 2009, according to the Amerasian Independent Voice of America and the Amerasian Fellowship Association, 75,000 Amerasians and their immediate relations had come to the United States in the decades following the war, while a few hundred stayed in Vietnam. But only around 2 percent ever reunited with their biological American parent.²⁸

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

As they have grown in number and diversity, so too have Asian-Pacific American communities spread out across the United States. If the story of the previous era (1941–1992) occurred mostly in the American West and Hawaii, the story of our modern era also takes place along the Eastern Seaboard, the Gulf Coast, and in the Midwest. In an increasingly globalized world, Asian immigrants have begun practicing “transnational immigration” as well, living or commuting between one’s home country and the United States.²⁹

Although the West Coast remains the home of nearly half the adult APA population (47 percent), communities have sprung up all over the United States. As of the 2010 Census, 20 percent live in the Northeast, 21 percent in the South, and 11 percent in the Midwest.³⁰ Despite the growing national population, in the 10 years between 2000 and 2010, the proportion of Asian Americans living in the West has actually decreased while rising in the South, the region with the fastest growth rate in the country.³¹

Despite the general tendency to put down roots in the western states, the settlement patterns of the six largest Asian-American communities—Chinese, Filipinos, Indians, Vietnamese, Koreans, and Japanese—seem to share few, if any, commonalities. Of the largest group, 49 percent of adult Chinese Americans live in the West, but a sizable population (27 percent) lives in the Northeast. The vast majority of adult Filipinos living in the United States have settled in the West (66 percent), while the South represents the next largest



Representative Robert Mrazek of New York championed refugee benefits for cultural and language training to children with Vietnamese and American parents.

Collection of the U.S. House of Representatives



Located in a primarily Vietnamese neighborhood of Port Arthur, Texas, the Queen of Peace Shrine and Gardens features a statue of the Virgin Mary in a pagoda. No longer concentrated on the West Coast, Asian-Pacific American communities today exist throughout the United States.

Image courtesy of the Library of Congress

population at 16 percent. Nearly half the adult Vietnamese population lives in the West (49 percent), but a substantial 32 percent also lives in the South, especially along the Gulf Coast. Among adult Koreans, 45 percent live in the West, but nearly equal numbers live in the South and Northeast (23 and 21 percent, respectively).³²

At one end of the spectrum, adult Indian Americans are the most geographically dispersed Asian-American community in the United States: 31 percent live in the Northeast, 29 percent in the South, 24 percent in the West, and 17 percent in the Midwest. At the other end are adult Japanese Americans. An overwhelming majority (71 percent) live in the West, followed well behind by the South at 12 percent, the Northeast at 9 percent, and the Midwest at 8 percent.³³

On a state-by-state level, California led the nation in 2010 with the largest Asian-American population (5,556,592). It was followed by New York (1,579,494), Texas (1,110,666), New Jersey (795,163), Hawaii (780,968), Illinois (668,694), Washington (604,251), Florida (573,083), Virginia (522,199), and Pennsylvania (402,587).³⁴

Pacific Diaspora

A movement of people both within the Pacific and from the Pacific to the mainland (and occasionally back to the Pacific) has also begun changing the face of the American electorate. As the historian Paul Spickard has pointed out, “This is not an entirely new phenomenon. Islanders have been moving around the Pacific for as long as memory recalls, for many hundreds of years.” “Nor is migration to North America wholly new,” he observed, pointing out that Pacific Islanders worked in a host of 19th-century industries on the West Coast. What is different, however, is the “velocity and impact of such movements” in the late 20th and early 21st centuries.³⁵

The 2010 Census revealed that 1.2 million people (or 0.4 percent of the entire U.S. population) identified as either Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, which it defined as “a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.”³⁶ Although statistically small, their numbers increased “more than three times faster than the total U.S. population” between 2000 and 2010, making their growth rate second only to that of the Asian-American community, which the Census counts separately. It is important to note that many Pacific Islanders are American nationals and, therefore, legally able to move to the mainland United States. More than 70 percent of Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders call the West home, and over half live in Hawaii and California. Another 16 percent live in the South (which also experienced a population surge during the 2000s), 7 percent in the Northeast, and 6 percent in the Midwest. Native Hawaiians represent the largest group, followed by Samoans, and Guamanians or Chamorro.³⁷

Many young people from American Samoa, Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands enlist in the U.S. military, seeking better benefits and higher salaries. Others have settled in Hawaii and on the mainland—particularly California and Utah—to pursue an education, often with the sponsorship of religious organizations.³⁸

For Delegate Eni F. H. Faleomavaega, who represented American Samoa in the House from 1989 to 2015, this diaspora often influenced his constituent outreach. “I’m probably the only member that has to go to San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Diego, or Hawaii where we have communities ... where I would attend their community activities,” he said in a 2011 oral history. In his experience, Samoans living on the mainland often preferred speaking to him instead of their own Representative. “They call me all over the country,” he said. “Of course, our men and women in the military, I take care of them. We also have a number from Western Samoa who live in the United States and I try to help them as well.”³⁹

LEGACY OF EXCLUSION

Yet, despite their often successful political mobilization, Asian Pacific Americans continue to live with a legacy of exclusion that stretches back more than 160 years. “To be Asian American in the twenty-first century,” observed the historian Erika Lee, “is an exercise in coming to terms with a contradiction: benefiting from new positions of power and privilege while still being victims of hate crimes and microaggressions that dismiss Asian American issues and treat Asian Americans as outsiders in their own country.”⁴⁰

Their growing population, combined with that unique duality—“with histories of both exclusion and inclusion,” Lee has written—enables Asian and Pacific Americans to ask what it means to be American even as they shape and reshape the country in the 21st century.⁴¹

The modern Congress reflects this in ways large and small. But perhaps the most immediate example is its direct link to the legacy of World War II: Three Members first elected to Congress in this era had either personal or familial experience with the forced evacuation and policy of internment that followed the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Congresswoman Doris Matsui was born in the Poston Camp in Arizona; Congressman Mike Honda lived in the Amache Camp as an infant; and Congressman Mark Takano’s parents had been interned as well.

PACIFIC ISLANDERS: TERRITORIAL STATUS AND REPRESENTATION

As the number of Asian-American immigrants arriving in the United States steadily rose, Pacific Islanders continued to search for ways to clarify their relationship with the United States government. In the fall of 2008, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) was the last of the unincorporated U.S. territories to receive representation in Congress when it elected its first nonvoting Delegate to the House. Since the end of World War II, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, and other American possessions in the Pacific grappled with persistent questions concerning political sovereignty and congressional representation. This political upheaval frequently reached the chambers of Congress, involving APA Members and Delegates in a debate that lasted more than three decades.



Administrators process evacuees about to leave the Poston Camp in Yuma County, Arizona, in 1945. California Representative Doris Matsui was born in the camp.

Image courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration

Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, or Micronesia

The Northern Mariana Islands consist of 17 islands in the western Pacific Basin just north of the equator. Since 1898, when Guam, the southernmost island of the Marianas, was seized by the U.S. Navy during the Spanish-American War, possession of these islands frequently changed hands. Guam eventually became a U.S. possession, and what was left of the Spanish Empire in the Pacific, including the Northern Mariana Islands, was sold to Germany in 1899. During World War I, however, Germany lost its Pacific colonies to Japan, and during World War II the U.S. military captured two Japanese-held islands (Saipan and Tinian) in the Marianas.⁴²

At the end of hostilities in the Pacific, the U.S. Navy retained control of the Japanese South Seas Islands. On July 18, 1947, Congress agreed by joint resolution to authorize President Harry S. Truman's approval of the Trusteeship Agreement for the Territory of the Pacific Islands. The agreement with the United Nations Security Council required the United States to "make ample provision for the political, economic, social, and educational development" of South Pacific territories, creating the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (TTPI), commonly referred to as Micronesia.⁴³

As in Guam and American Samoa, President Truman had already decided in November 1946 that the U.S. Navy would administer the TTPI on an interim basis, but traditional forms of authority based upon kinship, and which were often specific to each island, remained the basis for local governance. In 1951 President Truman ordered the transfer of administrative responsibilities over Micronesia from the U.S. Navy to the Interior Department, and throughout the 1960s the department granted Micronesians small concessions toward their own self-determination, including the creation of the Micronesian Congress in 1965.⁴⁴

Under obligations to the United Nations, Congress slowly began addressing the status of the Trust Territory in the second half of the 1960s. Senator Hiram L. Fong of Hawaii introduced S. Con. Res. 50 in August 1965, proposing

Palau was one of the islands included in the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. Congress created the territory, commonly referred to as Micronesia, in 1947.

Image courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration



that Micronesia merge with the state of Hawaii, an effort, he claimed, to push Congress to reach a consensus over the fate of the territories.⁴⁵ Senator Fong was also among three Members who introduced measures to establish a commission on the TTPI in 1967.⁴⁶

During the 91st Congress (1969–1971), Representative Mink introduced bills to clarify Micronesia’s status by either providing for a Trust Territory Organic Act or by authorizing a Micronesian constitutional convention. “Mr. Speaker, all the people of the Pacific who live under the American flag make up my larger unofficial constituency. To these people who have no voice in the governance of their lives I believe all of us owe a special responsibility,” Mink said. “Regrettably in our busy lives we do not have the time to devote to these voiceless, powerless, subjugated peoples living on the remote coral atolls of the Pacific.”⁴⁷ But it soon became clear that no House action would take place unless various agencies of jurisdiction within the federal government agreed to give the TTPI a greater level of autonomy.

Micronesia Flies Apart

In September 1969, officials from three key executive departments—State, Defense, and Interior—began meeting with delegates from the Micronesian Congress’s joint committee on future status. The discussions were slow initially. The United States was hesitant to relinquish military control over the region and, while many in the TTPI expressed a desire for independence, the Northern Mariana district representatives went the other way in the hopes of creating a permanent relationship with the United States.⁴⁸

This had been a goal of the Northern Marianas since the 1960s, when the district legislature sponsored a series of plebiscites on the chain’s future political status that reaffirmed the electorate’s desire to reunite with nearby Guam, citing the neighboring island’s economic progress. The passage of the Guam Organic Act of 1950 had only strengthened the reunification movement. Guamanians, however, rejected a referendum proposing to join the Northern Marianas in 1969.⁴⁹ The Saipanese—those living in the Northern Mariana Islands’ largest and most populous island, Saipan—were most comfortable with English and felt economically burdened by the rest of Micronesia. After Guam’s rejection, they more aggressively pursued their own agreement.⁵⁰

By the early 1970s, the situation in Micronesia grew tense and, on February 19, 1971, Northern Mariana officials threatened to leave the Trust Territory. The very next day a fire set by an unknown arsonist destroyed the legislative chambers of the Micronesian Congress in Saipan. The entire Northern Mariana delegation then boycotted a special session scheduled for later in the year.⁵¹

Northern Mariana officials began negotiating directly with the United States over the chain’s political status, retaining a law firm to represent their interests in the capital and establishing the Political Status Commission in 1972. The Northern Marianas also sent representatives to the United Nations Trusteeship Council to report the islands’ desire to negotiate for a closer association with the United States, separate from the rest of Micronesia.⁵²



Senator Hiram L. Fong of Hawaii, shown here in his office decorated with flowers, proposed that Micronesia merge with the state of Hawaii in 1965.

Image courtesy of the U.S. Senate Historical Office



Representative Phillip Burton of California introduced legislation to create the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in 1975.

Image courtesy of the Library of Congress

President Gerald R. Ford signs H.J. Res. 549 into law on February 24, 1976, to form the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

Image courtesy of the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library/National Archives and Records Administration

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and the Associated States

Negotiations on the future status of the Northern Mariana Islands opened on December 13, 1972, and continued for two years. The final agreement allowed for local governance of the islands, but gave the United States the right to control defense and foreign affairs. All federal tax revenue would return to the islands' coffers in addition to an annual federal grant. Finally, it provided for a constitutional convention to outline the new government.⁵³

On February 15, 1975, representatives of the Northern Marianas and the U.S. government signed the Covenant to Establish a Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in Political Union with the United States of America, and the Mariana district legislature approved it five days later. On June 17, 1975, 95 percent of registered voters in the Marianas participated in a plebiscite monitored by the United States; 78.8 percent voted approval of the covenant.⁵⁴

President Gerald R. Ford officially informed the U.S. Congress of the covenant and sent a proposed joint resolution on July 1, 1975. Legislation introduced by California Representative Phillip Burton, who chaired the Interior Subcommittee on Territorial and Insular Affairs, creating the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) moved swiftly through the House. It unanimously passed the Interior and Insular Affairs Committee and cleared the House by voice vote before the end of the month. Guam Delegate Antonio Borja Won Pat conveyed his constituents' support for the measure as well as his desire "that this union will usher in a new era of good will, mutual cooperation and eventual union of all Chamorros in the Marianas." With minor changes, the Senate concurred on February 24, 1976. In an East Room ceremony on March 24, 1976, President Ford signed the joint resolution into law.⁵⁵

The CNMI was the only part of the Trust Territory to remain directly tied to the United States as a commonwealth. After a long period of negotiations with the U.S. government and several popular referenda, three independent states emerged from the remnants of the TTPI: the Federated States of Micronesia, the



Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau. By the end of the 1980s, Congress had passed legislation that formalized a Compact of Free Association between these three island states and the U.S. government. The United States agreed to provide military defense and financial aid while retaining the right to military bases and other strategic considerations.⁵⁶

Guam's Pursuit of Commonwealth Status

For Guamanians, CNMI's commonwealth agreement had bolstered a desire to negotiate one of their own.⁵⁷ The struggle for greater political autonomy continued with a new Territorial Delegate, Democrat Robert A. Underwood, who had defeated the Republican incumbent Ben Garrido Blaz in 1992. Underwood introduced the Guam Commonwealth Act (H.R. 1521) in late March 1993.⁵⁸ The measure called for the creation of a commonwealth with full self-government, the preservation of Chamorro culture, and the "mutual consent" of Guam and the United States when considering federal policies affecting the territory. The bill also sent an important signal, that Guam remained interested in achieving commonwealth status. But progress remained fitful during the first part of President William J. (Bill) Clinton's administration, in part because of staff turnover in the Interior Department office handling the negotiations.⁵⁹

In 1997 Underwood took to the House Floor to ask his colleagues to consider commonwealth status for Guam. "The 100th anniversary of the Spanish-American War marks an important time period for the United States to, in a sense, come face to face with its imperial past," Underwood declared, "and come face to face with what hopefully will be in the next century a more perfect union not only for the 50 States and the District of Columbia, but all the people who live under the American flag."⁶⁰ A House Resources Committee hearing in October 1997, however, marked the end of commonwealth negotiations. The Interior Department pointed to four major demands by Guam that it could not support: insisting that the commonwealth government would have veto power over legislation or regulations applying to Guam; limiting decisions on Guam's political status to Chamorros at the exclusion of other U.S. citizen residents; transferring control over immigration and labor policy to the commonwealth; and creating a joint commission with authority to determine the transfer of military lands in Guam.⁶¹ With the two sides unable to agree on the details, the negotiations ended. On the centennial of the United States capturing Guam in 1998, Delegate Underwood, disappointed, spoke of "a relationship that has not been fully consummated. It is not like a wedding anniversary, but more the recognition of the date when two people first met and began a relationship."⁶²

CNMI Congressional Representation

Largely because of the territory's small population, the CNMI commonwealth legislation failed to include language about its representation in the U.S. Congress. During the covenant negotiations, Mariana representatives had proposed the creation of a nonvoting Delegate once the territory's population reached 50,000 people. The 1970 Census had recorded 9,640 inhabitants in the Mariana district, far smaller than the other territories that gained a Delegate in the 1970s: Guam, 84,996; the U.S. Virgin Islands, 62,468; and American



A campaign button touts Antonio Borja Won Pat's experience. Won Pat served as the Delegate from Guam in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1973 to 1984.

Collection of the U.S. House of Representatives



President William J. (Bill) Clinton speaks with Guam Delegate Robert A. Underwood during a Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus meeting in 1998.

Image courtesy of the William J. Clinton Library/
National Archives and Records Administration



Donna Christensen, Delegate of the Virgin Islands, worked to establish a nonvoting Delegate for the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. The first Delegate from the Northern Mariana Islands, Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan, was seated in the U.S. House of Representatives in 2009.

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Samoa, 27,159.⁶³ But U.S. negotiators argued that only Congress could approve a nonvoting Delegate and did not include it in the covenant draft.⁶⁴

As the only U.S. territory without an elected representative in Washington, CNMI followed the strategy other territories had used by sending an unofficial representative—one they called a “resident agent”—to lobby Congress and the executive branch starting in 1979.⁶⁵ “I cannot speak for the CNMI on the floor of the House of Representatives,” Pedro A. Tenorio, the CNMI’s fourth unofficial representative, noted in his testimony before a House subcommittee in 2007, “nor can I defend my people except as an invited witness at hearings such as this one.”⁶⁶

In the House, Guam’s Delegates often looked after the interests of the CNMI. In January 1997, Delegate Underwood introduced a bill to grant the CNMI a nonvoting Delegate, but nothing came of it in either the 105th or 106th Congresses (1997–2001). But by 2000 Census data put the CNMI population at 69,221, well above the threshold for the territories receiving congressional representation in the 1970s.⁶⁷ Underwood introduced his CNMI Delegate bill again in May 2001 during the 107th Congress (2001–2003). “Right now, every American is represented, either full, by their representatives and senators, or partially, like the people of Guam, by the delegate,” noted an Underwood spokeswoman. “The only people who are not are the residents of the CNMI.”⁶⁸ The bill made it out of committee, but the House did not take it up. By the next Congress, Underwood had left Capitol Hill to run for governor of Guam.

Delegate Donna Christensen of the U.S. Virgin Islands eventually took up the mantle, introducing H.R. 3079 in the 110th Congress (2007–2009) on July 18, 2007. The bill to amend the commonwealth covenant extended U.S. immigration laws to the CNMI and provided for a nonvoting Delegate. According to Christensen, closing immigration loopholes to the CMNI provided leverage for the creation of the Delegate position, and she emphasized the strategic, national-security value of both Guam and the CNMI. The bill easily passed the House by voice vote. Bundled with nearly 60 other noncontroversial House-passed bills as S. 2739, it cleared the Senate and became law on May 8, 2008. The following November CNMI elected its first Territorial Delegate, Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan.⁶⁹

APA MEMBERS ON CAPITOL HILL: GROWTH, ORGANIZATION, AND REPRESENTATION

In the relatively brief modern era that began in 1993, 28 Asian Pacific Americans have served in Congress. All but one of them have served in the House, and three total have served in the U.S. Senate. Together, they constitute nearly 47 percent of all the Asian Pacific Americans ever to serve in Congress. More APAs serve in the 115th Congress (2017–2019)—18 at the time of this writing—than have ever served before simultaneously.⁷⁰

The reach of the Hart–Celler Immigration Act of 1965 is evident in the story of APAs in the modern Congresses. Whereas Japanese Americans stood out as the largest Asian immigrant community in the previous era and, accordingly, sent more Members to Congress than any other APA ethnic group, the diversity of the modern cohort is perhaps its most striking feature. Fueled by immigration



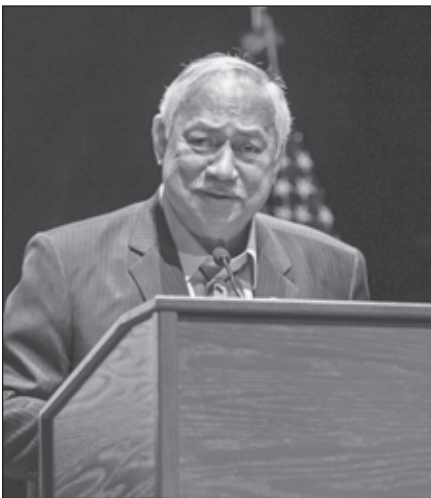
Flanked by (from left to right) California Representative Don Edwards, California Representative Norman Y. Mineta, Guam Delegate Robert A. Underwood, California Representative Nancy Pelosi, and Hawaii Representative Neil Abercrombie, Representative Patsy Takemoto Mink of Hawaii speaks at a press conference on the formation of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC) in 1994. The CAPAC provides opportunities for Asian Pacific American Members and Members with large APA constituencies to network and build influence in Congress.

Image courtesy of the Library of Congress

policies that opened the door to new Asian groups, this group includes Joseph Cao, the first Vietnamese American to serve in Congress, and Jay C. Kim, the first Korean American elected to Capitol Hill. In 1993 Robert C. (Bobby) Scott of Virginia, an African American with Filipino ancestry, won election to the House as the first individual of Filipino heritage to serve in Congress since the last of the archipelago's Resident Commissioners left with the grant of independence in 1946. In 2004 Louisiana's Bobby Jindal became just the second Asian-Indian American elected to Congress, more than 40 years after Dalip Singh (Judge) Saund of California left the House.

Before 1993 only two APA women, both representing Hawaii and both of Japanese ancestry, had ever served in Congress: Patsy Mink and Patricia Saiki. But beginning in 2005, with the election of California's Doris Matsui, who succeeded her late husband Robert T. Matsui in a special election, an additional 10 APA women have been elected to Congress through the 2016 elections. This reflects the general upward trend of women entering political office in recent decades. It also underscores the tendency of minority women to account for a larger percentage of their overall ethnic group in Congress compared to white women.⁷¹ Mazie Hirono of Hawaii registered a notable accomplishment in this era when, after three terms as a U.S. Representative, she became the first APA woman ever to serve in the U.S. Senate, succeeding Senator Daniel K. Akaka in 2012.

A majority of these Members came from states that had large APA constituencies and a history of electing Asian Americans to Congress, seven from California and five from Hawaii. But for the first time APA Representatives were elected from more diverse geographic locales, with Virginia's Bobby Scott becoming the first APA Member of Congress to serve from a U.S. state outside



Eni F. H. Faleomavaega, Delegate from American Samoa, addresses a meeting of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus in 2013. Faleomavaega served in Congress from 1998 to 2015.

Image courtesy of the U.S. House of Representatives Photography Office

of Hawaii or California. Others won election from districts in Ohio, Michigan, New York, Louisiana, and Washington State. Additionally, three new APA Territorial Delegates were elected to Congress in this period.

As with the generation of APAs that served between World War II and the end of the Cold War, this cohort served on a wide range of congressional committees reflecting the complete spectrum of legislative interests.⁷² In 2007 Mike Honda became just the second Asian American to serve on the House Appropriations Committee. Steve Austria of Ohio followed him in 2011. California's Doris Matsui became the first to serve on the Energy and Commerce Committee; her husband, Robert T. Matsui, had sat for one term when it was named the Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee. Tammy Duckworth of Illinois and Tulsi Gabbard of Hawaii, both Iraq War veterans, served on the Armed Services Committee.

While long-serving Hawaiian Senators Akaka and Daniel K. Inouye chaired two Senate committees apiece in this era and a number of subcommittees, only Norman Y. Mineta of California, who led the Public Works and Transportation Committee in the 103rd Congress (1993–1995), chaired a House committee. Several others, however, were tapped as chairmen of subcommittees. In the 105th Congress (1997–1999), Representative Kim led Transportation and Infrastructure's Subcommittee on Public Buildings and Economic Development. In the 110th and 111th Congresses (2007–2011), three APAs chaired House subcommittees: Virginia's Bobby Scott (Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security Subcommittee of the Judiciary Committee); American Samoa's Eni F. H. Faleomavaega (Asia, the Pacific, and the Global Environment Subcommittee of the Foreign Affairs Committee); and Washington's David Wu (Technology and Innovation Subcommittee of the Science Committee). In the 114th Congress (2015–2017), Aumua Amata Coleman Radewagen of American Samoa became just the second APA woman (after Patsy Mink) to wield a gavel when she led the Small Business Committee's Health and Technology Subcommittee.

Whereas in prior periods the legislative interests of APAs in Congress reflected the unique trajectories of the immigrant or Pacific Islander groups to which they belonged, organization and coordination have marked APA efforts in the last two decades. With the creation of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC) in 1994 and efforts to collaborate with other minorities in Congress in the early 2000s, an agenda emerged that sought to leverage the power of a growing voting bloc in Congress to address shared areas of interest, from immigration to civil rights.

Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus

In recent years, APA Members of Congress have taken steps to increase their effectiveness as a group. With American Samoa and the Northern Mariana Islands gaining Territorial Delegates in 1981 and 2009, respectively, the number of Pacific Islanders serving in Congress has increased. With that increase, APA Members began to pool resources and information.

In the mid-1990s, APA Members followed congressional precedent by establishing an informal caucus that provided forums for networking and building influence in Congress. In a manner reminiscent of the creation of

the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) and the Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC) in the 1970s, the establishment of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC) in 1994 flowed from frustrations that APA concerns were poorly understood and often ignored in Washington, DC.⁷³

On May 16, 1994, nearly a dozen charter members joined forces to form CAPAC, drawing its membership from both the House and Senate to raise awareness for APA issues and find legislative strength in numbers.⁷⁴ As cofounder Patsy Mink of Hawaii explained at the time, “We have felt that we have not been consulted on important steps taken by this administration and the ones in the past.” Mink and others pointed specifically to health care, welfare, and immigration issues. Representative Mineta, whom colleagues elected as the first chairman of the group, recalled that APA Members had worked together on an informal basis for years, but “found that we didn’t have the leverage or the clout to get the attention to us on certain issues.” When the Clinton administration began to court other minority groups in Congress about proposed health care reforms, but failed to consult with APA Members, Mineta demanded and won a White House meeting with the President for Asian-American legislators.⁷⁵

From the outset, Mineta and others believed that one of the group’s organizing principles was to publicize issues affecting APAs within Congress. “We think that this caucus can be used as an education forum,” he noted shortly after CAPAC’s creation. “We have to educate our colleagues that we’re the fastest growing population. We’re still evidently a mystery to a lot of our own fellow members in Congress.”⁷⁶ One of the group’s first efforts was to counter anti-immigrant measures that cropped up in debate about an \$8.6 billion supplemental bill to address the devastation in Northridge, California, following the 1994 earthquake there. Mineta recalled, “There were amendments being offered that would say for instance that ‘none of the programs could be paid to undocumented residents.’ My point was: ‘How could you exclude emergency food, emergency housing to people just because they happened to be in the eyes of these people illegal aliens[?]’”⁷⁷

CAPAC was distinct from another Asian-focused caucus created in 1994, the Congressional Caucus on India and Indian-Americans (CCIIA), which began as a foreign policy–centered group with Members interested in United States–India relations. Organized by New Jersey Representative Frank Pallone and seven other legislators, CCIIA boomed to more than 100 members within five years. It later expanded its activities toward Asian-Indian immigrant issues within the United States.⁷⁸

CAPAC’s rules permitted non-APAs who represented large Asian-American constituencies to serve as full-fledged members with the right to vote on policy and even serve in leadership positions.⁷⁹ In fact, three of the caucus’s charter members were not of Asian-American descent: Nancy Pelosi and Don Edwards of California and Neil Abercrombie of Hawaii. “It’s all about building bridges to a larger group, most of whom are not [of] Asian descent,” CAPAC chairman David Wu of Oregon observed in 2002.⁸⁰

Since its founding, CAPAC has had six chairs: Mineta, Mink, Underwood, Wu, Honda, and the current chair, Judy Chu of California. Chu was elected to the post in February 2011.⁸¹



Hawaii Representative Patsy Takemoto Mink advocates for the needs of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus with President William J. (Bill) Clinton in 1998.

Image courtesy of the William J. Clinton Library/
National Archives and Records Administration

The educational aspect of CAPAC's work remains a strong interest among its members and extends beyond the confines of Capitol Hill. As recently as the 114th Congress, the group has supported the creation of a national Asian-American museum within the Smithsonian Institution. Caucus member Grace Meng of New York has introduced bills to establish the National Museum of Asian Pacific American History and Culture, the most recent version being H.R. 868 in the 115th Congress.⁸²

In April 2002, CAPAC, CBC, and CHC formally agreed to work in concert as the so-called Tri-Caucus "with the purpose of addressing issues of mutual concern: civil rights, education, immigration, job training, housing, and economic development."⁸³ This marked an effort to create a potent congressional voting bloc and signaled the growing influence of minority representatives particularly within the House Democratic Caucus. It reflected shifting nationwide demographics, as urban communities that for decades had been majority African American now included large and growing numbers of Hispanic and APA populations and that the APA population was increasing faster than any other group in the country. The Tri-Caucus agreement also reflected the fact that leaders of the various caucuses chose to coordinate their efforts in key areas so as not to compete for limited federal resources.⁸⁴

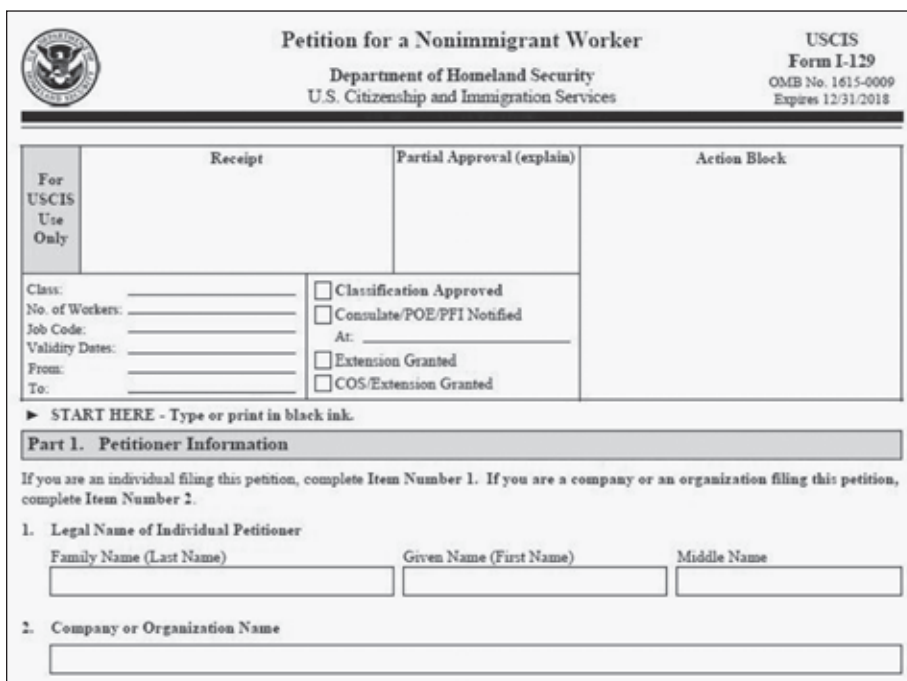
LEGISLATIVE INTERESTS

During its more than two decades of existence, CAPAC has acted as something of an informational clearinghouse on a wide array of issues ranging from immigration, to political participation, to racial profiling. The breadth of policy issues that the group has addressed reflects the heterogeneous nature of the APA community. During a 2006 series of floor speeches commemorating Asian Pacific American Heritage Month, then CAPAC Chairman Mike Honda noted,

The diverse Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus has addressed issues such as immigration, political participation, and racial profiling. This 2014 photograph shows (from left to right) Northern Mariana Islands Delegate Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan, California Representative Scott Peters, California Representative Jerry McNerney, Texas Representative Al Green, California Representative Judy Chu, Guam Delegate Madeleine Bordallo, California Representative Xavier Becerra, New York Representative Charles Rangel, Virginia Representative Robert C. (Bobby) Scott, and California Representative Mike Honda.

Image courtesy of the U.S. House of Representatives Photography Office





Petition for a Nonimmigrant Worker
 Department of Homeland Security
 U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

USCIS
 Form I-129
 OMB No. 1615-0009
 Expires 12/31/2018

For USCIS Use Only	Receipt	Partial Approval (explain)	Action Block
	Class: _____ No. of Workers: _____ Job Code: _____ Validity Dates: _____ From: _____ To: _____		
<input type="checkbox"/> Classification Approved <input type="checkbox"/> Consulate/POE/PFI Notified At: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Extension Granted <input type="checkbox"/> COS/Extension Granted			

► **START HERE** - Type or print in black ink.

Part 1. Petitioner Information

If you are an individual filing this petition, complete Item Number 1. If you are a company or an organization filing this petition, complete Item Number 2.

1. Legal Name of Individual Petitioner

Family Name (Last Name)	Given Name (First Name)	Middle Name
_____	_____	_____

2. Company or Organization Name

The Immigration Act of 1990 created the H-1B visa for specialty workers and allowed employers to hire skilled individuals for three years and to apply for an additional three years of residency. The H-1B visas created a new wave of immigration, as more than half of all H-1B visas since 1990 have been awarded to skilled workers from Asian nations.

Image courtesy of the Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

“As our community expands, we must also continue to educate our fellow citizens about the uniqueness of our experiences. The Asian Pacific Islander American community is often misperceived as monolithic. Our community is extremely diverse in our languages, ethnicities and culture. Aggregating such a large and diverse group makes it difficult to understand the unique problems faced by the individual and subgroups.”⁸⁵

Immigration

Immigration has become a perennial issue for APA Members of Congress, particularly regarding preference categories for special professional skills and family reunification. A major piece of legislation with far-reaching implications for Asian immigrants was the Immigration Act of 1990, which modified the H visa for “guest workers,” a program that extended back to the Immigration Act of 1952. For many years the H-1 visa existed for professionals in “specialty” occupations that required advanced training. The 1990 measure created the H-1B for specialty workers, allowing employers to hire skilled individuals for three years and to apply for an additional three years of residency. By the mid-1990s, the H-1B requests from information technology companies boomed as the high-tech industry blossomed. The 1990 act increased the number of such H visas from 54,000 to 140,000. By the time Congress passed the American Competitiveness in the Twenty-first Century Act in 2000, the number of H-1B visas alone had been increased to 195,000.⁸⁶

The H-1B visas created a new wave of immigration, as more than half of all H-1B visas since 1990 have been awarded to skilled workers from Asian nations: India, China, Taiwan, South Korea, and the Philippines. In some years, Asians accounted for 80 percent of all such recipients, and, by the late 1990s, the number of Asian migrants on such temporary visas exceeded the number of individuals admitted as permanent residents on employment-based visas.⁸⁷ This

created a complex immigration picture, since many of these individuals brought families to the United States or started families while in the country. Often these families had mixed statuses as immigrants with parents who were worker nonimmigrants and children who were American citizens.⁸⁸

In 2006, during the 109th Congress (2005–2007), a proposed immigration bill addressing border security and a path to legalized status for the more than 11 million estimated undocumented immigrants stalled in Congress. During congressional debate about various proposals, CAPAC called attention to aspects of immigration reform that directly affected Asian Pacific Americans, but which had received little attention by Congress or the media—issues like family reunification and the long backlog in the family immigration system, especially for applicants from Asian nations.⁸⁹

To highlight these and other immigration-related issues, CAPAC created its Immigration Task Force. In the 114th Congress, the task force listed among its top priorities preserving “our longstanding tradition of family-based immigration,” reducing wait times for family reunification and related visa applications, providing “legal status and a path to permanent residence for undocumented immigrants” who pay taxes and abide by the law, and easing restrictions on workers with H-1B visas.⁹⁰

Increasing Political Participation

Any analysis of Asian Pacific Americans’ political participation presents challenges because of their diversity and relatively small numbers. Yet, in recent decades, the accelerating population growth of APAs has increased their influence within the general electorate, especially in the western states where, as of 2010, they made up 11 percent of the region’s combined population. In California, 15 percent of the population is of APA descent, and in Hawaii it is 57 percent.⁹¹

Recent surveys analyzing the six largest APA ethnic groups suggest that their voting-registration patterns are comparable to the general population.⁹² [Table 3.1] Voter turnout among these groups has been generally high. For instance, in the 2004 election, 65 percent of Asian Americans went to the polls, about 15 percent higher than the general electorate.⁹³ [Table 3.2]

Table 3.1: Voter Registration and Voting Percentages, 2008

U.S. Asian Groups	Percent Registered	Percent Voted
Japanese	81	76
Filipino	78	70
Asian Indian	76	63
Korean	70	65
Chinese	68	64
Vietnamese	64	63
U.S. Asians	72	66
General U.S. Population	75	70

Source: Pew Research Center, “The Rise of Asian Americans,” (4 April 2013): 163, <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2012/06/19/the-rise-of-asian-americans>.

Table 3.2: Voter Turnout, 2000 to 2012 (in thousands)

Group	2000	2004	2008	2012
U.S. Asians	2,045	2,768	3,357	3,904
General U.S. Population	110,826	125,736	131,144	132,948

Source: *The Diversifying Electorate—Voting Rates by Race and Hispanic Origin in 2012 (and Other Recent Elections)*, P20-568, prepared by Thom File, U.S. Census Bureau (Washington, DC, issued May 2013).

Table 3.3: Political Ideology Percentages, 2012

U.S. Asian Groups	Conservative	Moderate	Liberal
Filipino	33	42	20
Korean	33	30	30
Japanese	28	36	29
Chinese	21	39	31
Vietnamese	19	34	34
Asian Indian	18	39	37
U.S. Asians	24	37	31
General U.S. Population	34	37	24

Source: Pew Research Center, “The Rise of Asian Americans”: 158.

A recent Pew Research Center study attempted to plot the political spectrum in the United States by asking respondents to identify their political ideologies. In 2010 the U.S. population as a whole identified as more than a third “moderate,” a third “conservative,” and a quarter “liberal.” Asian Americans, however, identified themselves as more than a third “moderate,” but almost a third “liberal,” and just under a quarter “conservative.” In short, the six largest Asian Americans groups are left of center as a whole in a right-of-center country. These summary figures, though, hide wide variations that exist among the different ethnicities. [Table 3.3]

A 2008 study conducted by the Russell Sage Foundation discovered that, when it came to party identification, a large number of Asian Pacific Americans did not identify with any party. In fact, nonidentifiers turned out to be a plurality of responses (35 percent), followed by Democrats (31 percent), Independents (20 percent), and Republicans (14 percent).⁹⁴

Given the relatively recent trends toward a better understanding of the characteristics of the Asian Pacific American electorate, voter organization and registration became a particular area of emphasis for CAPAC.⁹⁵ In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, CAPAC Chairman Honda traveled to southern Louisiana to advise the Vietnamese community that was still struggling to recover from the devastation on how to be more politically active. That visit served to inspire Joseph Cao’s political career and his historic election to the House just two years later, when he became the first Vietnamese American elected to Congress.⁹⁶

Civil Liberties

The policy of internment during World War II burned a deep mental scar in the Japanese-American community that redress has not been able to fully heal. Accordingly, APA Members of Congress and activists have often taken it upon themselves to ensure that such a traumatic event is never repeated, particularly in instances where internment by group characteristics has been raised as a



Hurricane Katrina ravaged the Gulf Coast in 2005. California Representative Mike Honda, chair of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, traveled to southern Louisiana to assist the local Vietnamese community. His visit inspired Anh (Joseph) Cao to enter politics; Cao later became a Member from Louisiana and the first Vietnamese American in Congress.

Image courtesy of the Library of Congress

legitimate policy. For instance, during the summer of 1990, California state assemblyman Gil Ferguson authored a resolution hailing Japanese-American internment as justified. It sparked a 70-minute debate in the California state assembly that was mostly spent denouncing Ferguson's resolution. Many legislators simply abandoned the floor to register their disgust with Ferguson's measure. In the end, the resolution was soundly defeated, 60 to 4.⁹⁷

Civil liberties gained renewed national attention for Asian Pacific American Members of Congress, particularly in the months after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, as the nation prepared for the "War on Terror." Overnight, Americans of South-Asian heritage were identified by some as possible terrorists and businesses, residences, and individuals seen as Muslim (including the non-Muslim Sikhs) were attacked. On September 15, 2001, Balbir Singh Sodhi, owner of a gas station in Mesa, Arizona, was killed in an act of retaliation for the terrorist attacks.⁹⁸ Senator Inouye of Hawaii defended American Muslims in the aftermath of 9/11, comparing the bigotry directed at them to the experience of Japanese Americans following Pearl Harbor. "The lessons learned must remain as a grave reminder of what we must not allow to happen again to any group," Inouye warned.⁹⁹

Roughly 18 months later, during an interview on a phone-in radio talk show, North Carolina Congressman Howard Coble, the chairman of the House Judiciary's Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security favorably cited President Franklin D. Roosevelt's internment of Japanese Americans when responding "to a caller's suggestion that Arabs in the United States be imprisoned as an anti-terrorist measure." Several APA Members quickly responded, including Representatives Honda, Wu, and Robert T. Matsui of California. "If we do not accurately portray the past," Wu told the press, "we risk repeating it."¹⁰⁰

More recently, CAPAC has expressed concerns over various public Justice Department investigations of Chinese-American scientists that have been dropped with no charges, reminiscent of the long and drawn-out case of the physicist Wen Ho Lee over possible espionage. "We cannot tolerate another case of Asian-Americans being wrongfully suspected of espionage," said CAPAC Chairwoman Judy Chu. "The profiling must end."¹⁰¹

Guam War Claims

For decades, Guamanian Delegates in Congress sought restitution for damages incurred and wrongs committed during World War II. Over the course of the nearly three-year Japanese occupation of Guam, Chamorros of all ages were raped, beaten, or executed for small offenses. Many were subjected to forced marches and confinement in concentration camps. Others endured Japanese language and cultural assimilation schools.¹⁰² Into the 21st century—more than 70 years after the war ended—Guam's Delegates still pursued claims for compensation for island residents suffering the aftereffects of the destruction of life and property.

Following up on the efforts of both Delegates Won Pat and Ben Blaz, Robert Underwood introduced a war claims measure in each of the 104th, 105th, and 106th Congresses (1995–2001).¹⁰³ His bills, which requested \$20,000

for the descendants of those killed, \$7,000 for the injured, and \$5,000 to those subjected to forced marches or imprisonment, were all bogged down because Congress balked at the eventual cost and did not have access to what it considered to be an authoritative list of claimants. Underwood estimated the cost of the bill at up to \$50 million, but the Congressional Budget Office scored the legislation at three times that amount in 2000.¹⁰⁴

A change of strategy in the 106th Congress (1999–2001) finally overcame concerns about cost. Underwood began working with Hawaii Senator Inouye to create a fact-finding commission to identify claimants and estimate a more accurate cost.¹⁰⁵ He quickly recrafted the most recent version of his bill, H.R. 755, the War Restitution Act. The House Committee on Resources reported the bill as the Guam War Claims Review Commission Act, which established a five-member Guam War Claims Commission within the Department of Interior to determine through oral testimony and documentary evidence who was eligible for compensation and how much it would cost.¹⁰⁶ The House passed the amended bill on September 12, 2000, but the Senate was unable to take action on the measure before the end of the Congress.

Undeterred, Underwood introduced an identical bill (H.R. 308) in January 2001 at the start of the 107th Congress. Moments before the bill was approved by voice vote in March, Underwood hoped that with its passage “the World War II generation of the people of Guam ... will be finally made whole.” American Samoan Delegate Eni Faleomavaega further testified that every Guam Delegate from Underwood back to Won Pat had sought this “long, long overdue” legislation. Indeed, Underwood credited his predecessor, Delegate Ben Blaz—a Republican, who had been imprisoned by Japanese forces during World War II—for lobbying on his behalf, despite the fact that Underwood had once criticized Blaz on his lack of progress on the war claims issue.¹⁰⁷

It was November 2002 before Underwood’s bill cleared the Senate. President George W. Bush signed the Guam War Claims Review Commission Act into law on December 16, 2002. It marked Underwood’s last act in Congress: “Suffice to say that I had to evade legislative minefields, be mindful of the legislative clock and listen to the sage advice of experienced legislators like Daniel Inouye, Daniel Akaka, and Norman Mineta,” he recalled.¹⁰⁸

After receiving more than 5,300 responses to questionnaires in addition to the 18 boxes of claims, Delegate Won Pat had saved, the commission opened in September 2003.¹⁰⁹ The panel took the testimony of a “parade of survivors’ and their pitiful, agonizing, horrifying testimonies,” according to one local observer, before issuing its report on June 9, 2004. It recommended formal recognition by Congress for Guam’s suffering and loyalty.¹¹⁰ The proposed monetary compensation was greater than what Underwood had suggested in his bills: \$25,000 to the immediate survivors of Guamanians who died because of the Japanese occupation; \$12,000 for those who suffered at the hands of the Japanese and still were living in 1990; and the establishment of a foundation to fund World War II Loyalty Scholarships.¹¹¹

Underwood’s successor, Delegate Madeleine Bordallo, worked to implement the commission’s recommendations. In an effort to enact the report’s findings, former Delegate Blaz testified before the House Resources Committee in



Over several decades, Guam Delegates Ben Garrido Blaz, pictured here, Antonio Borja Won Pat, Robert A. Underwood, and Madeleine Bordallo each attempted to secure restitution for damages incurred during World War II.

Collection of the U.S. House of Representatives

2004. In a voice described as “booming at times and choked with emotion,” he appealed to his former colleagues: “If we are fellow Americans, the time is now. If we are yours, you should take us as your own. The time has come.”¹¹²

Beginning with the 109th Congress, Delegate Bordallo repeatedly proposed a bill to provide restitution for Guamanian war claims. Titled the Guam World War II Loyalty Recognition Act, the legislation passed the House during the 110th and 111th Congresses, but failed to become law.¹¹³ At a 2009 hearing held by the House Armed Services Committee, testimony by Guamanian Delegates and Guam’s residents highlighted the harrowing stories of survivors.¹¹⁴ After years of consideration, Congress included the Guam World War II Loyalty Recognition Act in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017. President Barack Obama signed it into law in late December 2016.¹¹⁵

Congress Recognizes APA History

Until relatively recently, so little was known about the history of Asian Pacific Americans within the institution of Congress that, at the press conference announcing the creation of CAPAC, reporters stumped the newly installed chairman, Norman Mineta, when they asked him who the first Asian-American Member was or how many total had served on Capitol Hill. “We have to write our own history,” Mineta remarked.¹¹⁶

The 1990s and early 2000s marked a period of remembrance and reflection as long-standing historical narratives about the United States’ century-long role as a Pacific power were supplanted by more complex and nuanced interpretations. In concert with federal efforts to memorialize internment and the legacies of World War II discussed in the previous section of this book, these new perspectives often illuminated the experiences and pivotal contributions of Asian and Pacific Americans to the national storyline.

Hawaii Senator Daniel K. Akaka introduced legislation in 1992 to acknowledge U.S. complicity in the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy at the end of the 19th century and to provide an apology to Native Hawaiians.

Image courtesy of the Library of Congress





Veterans of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, the 100th Infantry Battalion, and the Military Intelligence Service, which included Japanese-American soldiers, receive the Congressional Gold Medal on November 2, 2011.

Image courtesy of the U.S. House of Representatives Photography Office

As the centennial of the downfall of the Hawaiian monarchy approached, people began paying greater attention to the violent transfer of power in 1893 and the key role of U.S. sugar planters, financiers, and missionaries in the overthrow. In 1992, during the 102nd Congress (1991–1993), Senator Daniel Akaka first introduced a measure that acknowledged U.S. complicity in the rebellion and issued an apology to Native Hawaiians. The bill eventually worked its way through both chambers in the following Congress. On October 27, 1993, after little debate, the resolution (S.J. Res. 19) passed the Senate, 65 to 34. Less than a month later, the House passed the joint resolution, and President Bill Clinton signed it into law in late November.¹¹⁷

Senators Akaka and Inouye both lamented the nature of the kingdom's toppling and the damage the overthrow caused to the indigenous population; yet, the resolution also highlighted the native peoples' "determination to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territory, and their cultural identity." While carefully refraining from establishing precedent or labeling Native Hawaiians definitively as Native Americans, it noted that the centennial marked a timely moment for the United States to "acknowledge the historic significance of the illegal overthrow of the Kingdom of Hawaii, [and] to express its deep regret to the Native Hawaiian people."¹¹⁸

Remembrance found expression in other venues, too. As the World War II generation slowly passed from the scene in the 1990s and early 2000s, momentum built to commemorate the contributions of groups whose service had never formally been recognized, including the Tuskegee Airmen, Native-American Code Talkers, and the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs). During the 111th Congress (2009–2011), California Senator Barbara Boxer introduced a resolution (S. 1055) to award the Congressional Gold Medal to the Japanese-American army units of the European theater, the 100th Infantry Battalion, and the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, as well as the Military Intelligence Service



The 442nd Regimental Combat Team, composed almost entirely of Japanese Americans, trains at Camp Shelby, Mississippi, in 1943.

Image courtesy of the Library of Congress



Senator Daniel K. Inouye speaks to fellow veterans of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team as they receive the Congressional Gold Medal on November 2, 2011.

Image courtesy of the U.S. House of Representatives Photography Office

The Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus meets with President Barack Obama in the Cabinet Room of the White House in 2011. Left to right on the far side of the table: Northern Mariana Islands Delegate Gregorio Kili Camacho Sablan, California Representative Judy Chu, President Obama, Guam Delegate Madeleine Bordallo, California Representative Doris Matsui, and Texas Representative Al Green.

Image courtesy of the Barack Obama Presidential Library/National Archives and Records Administration

that had Japanese-American soldiers serving in the Pacific theater. Since the earliest Congresses, the Congressional Gold Medal has been the highest national expression of appreciation for a recipient's distinguished achievements and contributions. After both houses of Congress swiftly passed Boxer's resolution, President Obama signed it into law on September 23, 2010.¹¹⁹

Congressional leaders presented the Congressional Gold Medal to veterans from the three units at a ceremony in the Capitol on November 2, 2011. Representatives from each group accepted the award, including Senator Inouye, a veteran of the 442nd and himself a Medal of Honor recipient. Wearing a dark navy blazer with a 442nd patch sewn on the breast pocket, Inouye recalled that, while officials first believed Japanese Americans "were unfit to put on a uniform," they were determined "to show their patriotism." He added, "This has been a long journey" to achieving recognition.¹²⁰ The Congressional Gold Medal toured the United States in 2013 and 2014 and was displayed in seven cities. It remains on permanent display at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History in Washington, DC, as part of "The Price of Freedom" exhibit.¹²¹

CONCLUSION

In June 2016, the Associated Press reported new Census numbers underscoring perhaps the most underappreciated characteristic of America's ever-changing demographics: Asian Americans remained "the fastest growing racial group in the United States." Between 2010 and 2016, the Asian-American population had jumped from 17.3 million to 21 million. That growth, according to the Associated Press, had been driven, in large part, by migration.¹²²



If these current population figures are any indication, the story of this period—larger numbers, greater diversity, and a more pronounced legislative agenda in Congress—has the potential to continue well into the 21st century.

But whatever changes occur over the next few decades, they will happen on the shoulders of the APA Members who have come before, and those Members came from all over. The congressional narrative is no longer dominated by Japanese-American legislators from California and Hawaii and, instead, features the life stories and family histories of immigrants from China, Vietnam, Korea, the Philippines, and India, to name a few.

On Capitol Hill, greater legislative influence has accompanied that new diversity. Although few APA Members have chaired committees or subcommittees in the modern era, the creation of CAPAC has given an added lift to the most pressing issues in recent Congresses: immigration, civil liberties, territorial interests, and public education campaigns to ensure America never again approves a policy as destructive as internment. Asian Pacific Americans have also served as cabinet members (Mineta) and as president pro tempore in the Senate (Inouye).

With a history that is, at turns, both heart-wrenching and awe-inspiring, Asian Pacific Americans in Congress have fought to overcome a century of exclusion to take their rightful place in both Congress and the American narrative.

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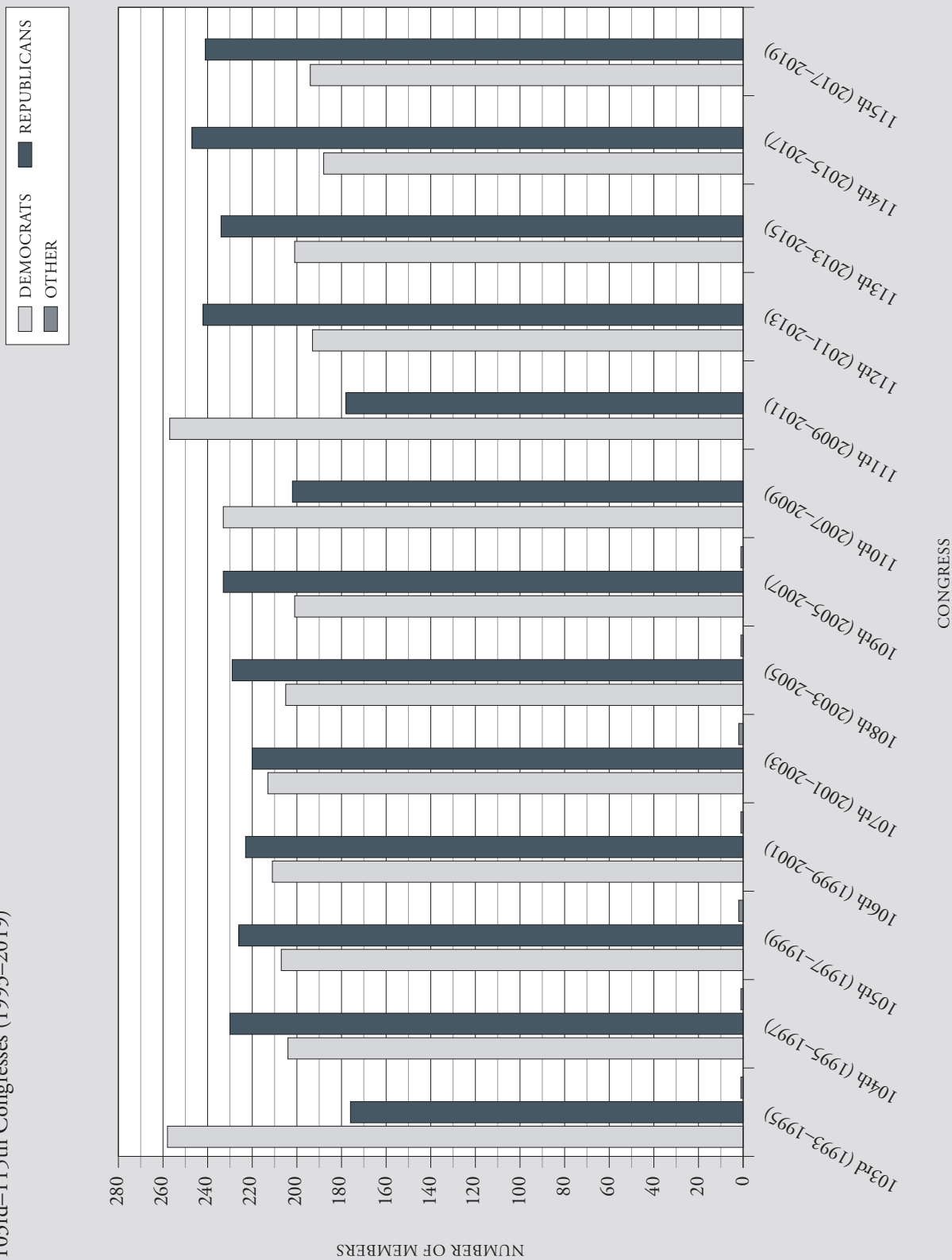
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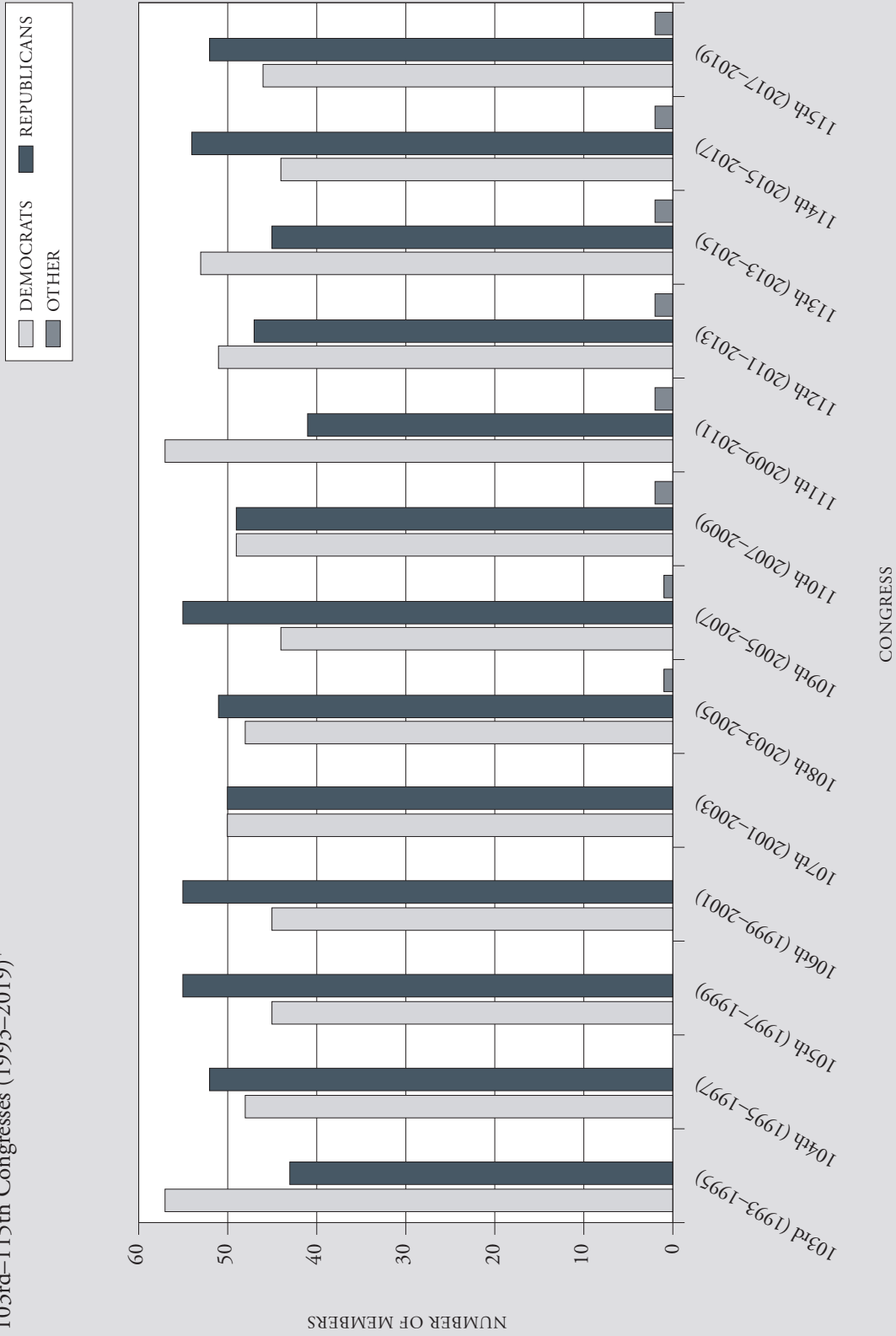
Party Divisions in the House of Representatives 103rd–115th Congresses (1993–2019)*



Sources: Office of the Historian, U.S. House of Representatives, “Party Divisions,” <http://history.house.gov>.

*Party division totals are based on Election Day results.

Party Divisions in the Senate 103rd–115th Congresses (1993–2019)*

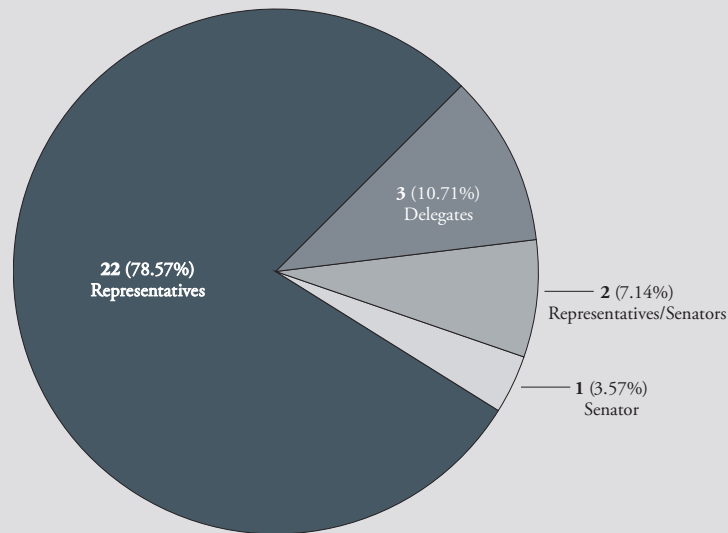


Sources: U.S. Senate Historical Office; *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, 1774–Present*, <http://bioguide.congress.gov>.

*Party division totals are based on Election Day results.

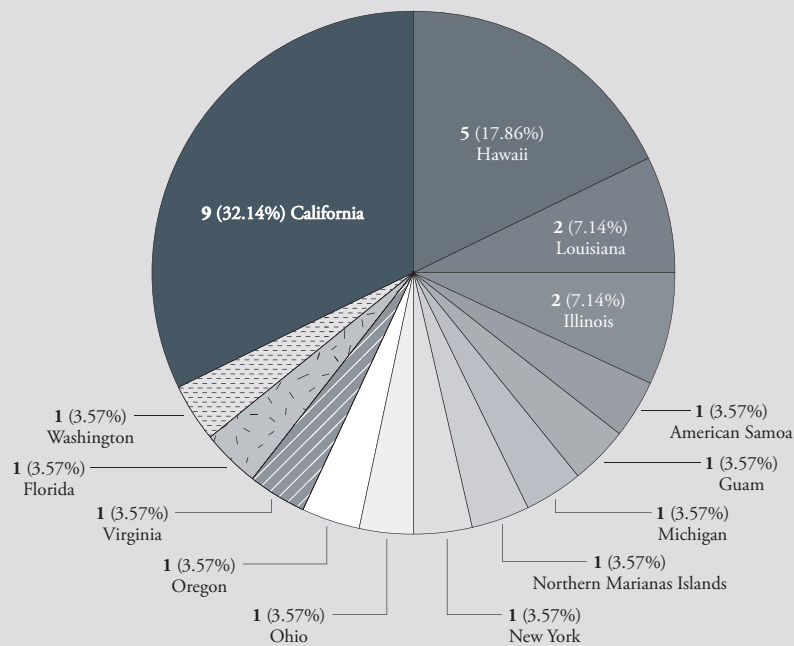
Asian and Pacific Islander American Members by Office

First Elected 1992–2017*



Asian and Pacific Islander American Members by State and Territory

First Elected 1992–2017*

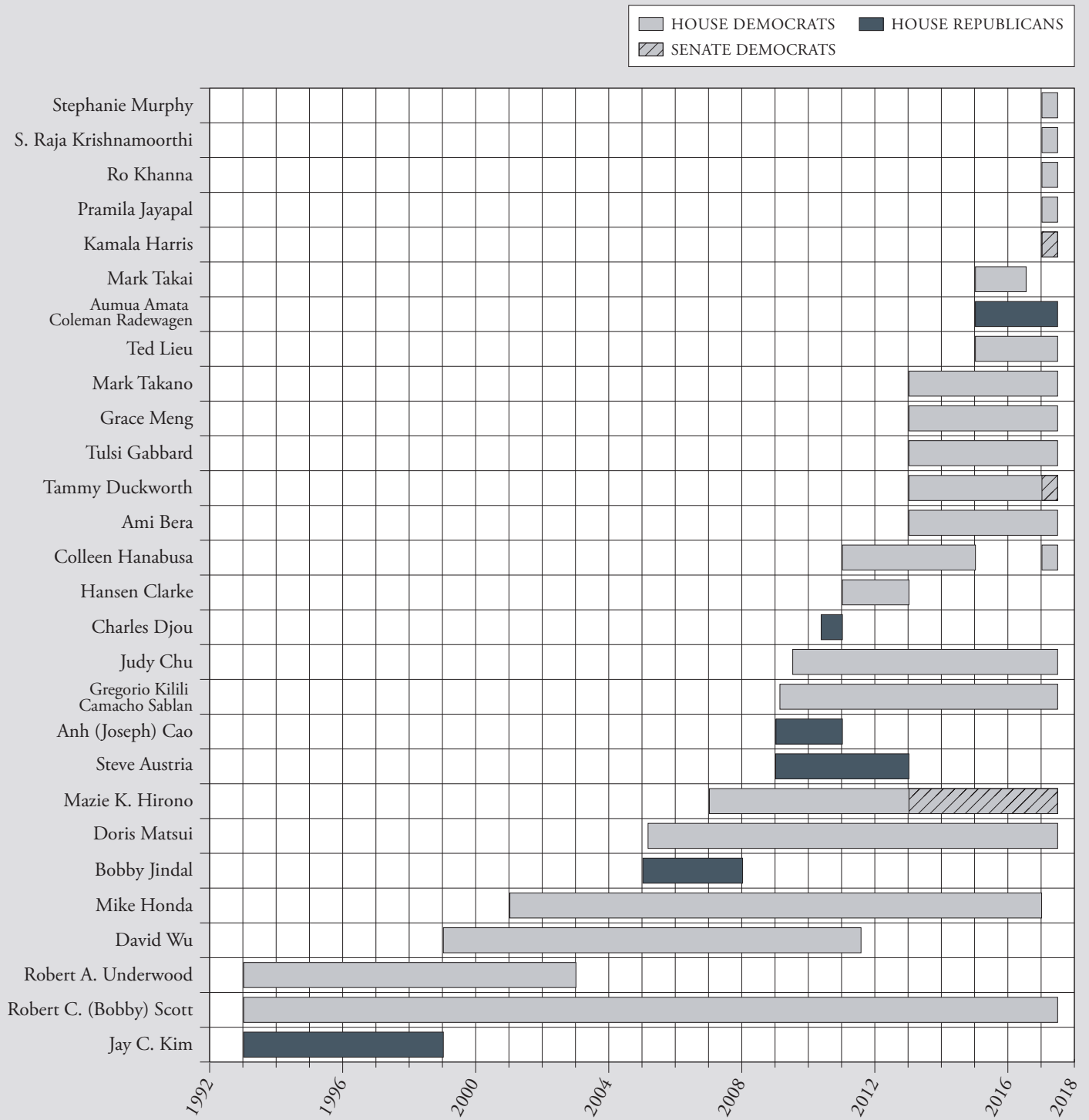


Sources: Appendix A: Asian and Pacific Islander Representatives, Senators, Delegates, and Resident Commissioners by Congress, 1900–2017; Office of the Historian, U.S. House of Representatives; U.S. Senate Historical Office.

*115th Congress (2017–2019) as of July 1, 2017.

Congressional Service

For Asian and Pacific Islander Americans in Congress First Elected 1992–2017*



*As of July 1, 2017.